

**LODI CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL JOINT CITY COUNCIL MEETING
WITH THE EAST SIDE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE
LODI ADOPT-A-CHILD OFFICE, 100 E. PINE STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2004**

A. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Special Joint City Council meeting with the East Side Improvement Committee of August 17, 2004, was called to order by Chairperson Castro at 6:05 p.m.

Present: Council Members – Beckman, Hitchcock, Howard, Land, and Mayor Hansen

Absent: Council Members – None

Present: East Side Improvement Committee Members – Asghar, Beswick, Golladay, Makapagal, Spinelli, St. Yves, Yadav, and Chairperson Castro

Absent: East Side Improvement Committee Members – Forkas

Also Present: Interim City Manager Keeter, City Attorney Schwabauer, and Deputy City Clerk Perrin

B. TOPIC(S)

Chairperson Castro welcomed the City Council and members of the public who were in attendance. Ms. Castro presented Council with the proposed amended bylaws of the East Side Improvement Committee (filed). The Committee requested that Council review the amended bylaws and set it for approval at a future meeting. In response to Mayor Hansen, Ms. Castro confirmed that the City Attorney has not reviewed the recommended changes to the bylaws. As requested, a copy of the original bylaws will be provided to Council.

Council Member Hitchcock asked for clarification of the language in Section 2 (c), which reads, "To act as an advocate for eastside residents in issues dealing with City controlled infrastructure improvements." Committee Member Beswick explained that this referred to sewer, water, and wastewater infrastructure improvements already in progress. Council Member Howard suggested that the improvements be included under its goals.

Review and discussion followed regarding the following goals and objectives of the Committee.

Better communication, both internally and externally

- Develop better contact with local religious organizations, service organizations, government agencies, and representatives.

Council Member Land suggested the Committee also contact commercial and national banks as they are required, under the Community Reinvestment Act, to give back to the community by providing investments, donations, bonds, community service hours, and loans at affordable rates for low-income areas. In response to Ms. Castro, Mr. Land stated he would be willing to assist the Committee in this area.

- Increase exposure through public service announcements, local theater ads, City of Lodi Web site, and newspaper coverage.

Committee Member Asghar stated that the Committee would like a link on the City of Lodi's Web site directed to a site specifically for the East Side Improvement Committee. Interim City Manager Keeter stated that staff would help develop the site and provide the link.

Council Member Hitchcock suggested that the Committee Members each have a link for members of the public to e-mail them with questions or concerns, as do the Council Members.

It was suggested that the East Side Improvement Committee designate a contact person to work with City staff.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- A concerned citizen commented that many people are unaware of the east side boundaries and further suggested that they be expanded to include the area from the railroad tracks to Cherokee Lane, to which Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman responded that the proposed new bylaws describe the east side area.

➤ Board Development Training – Team Building.

Ms. Asghar expressed the Committee's desire to bring in someone to teach board development (i.e. responsibilities of the staff liaison and board members, proper way in which to conduct a meeting, etc.).

Mayor Hansen stated that this parallels with the Chamber of Commerce Leadership Lodi program, which covers city and county government functions. He suggested that one to two East Side Improvement Committee members participate in the program and share the information with the rest of the Committee.

Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman suggested a Government Day be set up for board and commission members, to which Mayor Hansen agreed it would be beneficial to educate board members on departmental functions.

In reply to Ms. Keeter, Ms. Asghar stated that the Committee was more specifically interested in how to run meetings; however, the suggestion regarding training on government functions would also be of interest. City Attorney Schwabauer commented that he and the City Manager could conduct a training session on how to effectively run a meeting.

Council Member Hitchcock added that the cost for team-building sessions is quite expensive and suggested that there may be a member of the public willing to perform this function at no cost.

In response to Mr. Beswick, Committee Member St. Yves stated that the reason for the large public attendance at tonight's meeting was due mainly in part to her calling people urging them to attend.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Virginia Lahr suggested that the Committee contact Comcast, the cable TV provider, to assist with advertising. In the past, the cable company provided rolling advertisements and weekly half-hour segments at no charge.

Grants and fundraising

➤ Bus shelters.

Tiffani Fink, Transportation Manager, reported that the City received \$60,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding to install ten bus shelters with benches on the east side. The exact locations are yet to be determined, and the Committee is willing to assist in obtaining permission from property owners for the placement of the shelters. Also in progress is an E-MAP (Eastside Mobility Access Plan) Grant for sidewalks, lighting, etc.

➤ General Mills Grants for motion detector lighting and smoke detectors.

Ms. St. Yves reported that General Mills awarded the Committee a grant in the amount of \$2,500 to install 150 smoke detectors in homes of low-income residents, as well as a grant for motion detectors. Instructions were provided on how to install the detectors and how to change the batteries. Electric Utility staff will assist the Committee in setting up this program.

Council Member Howard questioned if residents would be required to sign a waiver to ensure the City is not held liable should something happen (i.e. detectors not installed properly or not kept in working condition). Ms. St. Yves responded that residents would attest to the fact that the detectors were installed and are operable.

Council Member Hitchcock suggested the Committee contact Electric Utility regarding possible use of Public Benefits Program funds.

NOTE: Council Member Land left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Pursue reactivation of Safe House Program

- Partner with Lodi Police Department and Lodi Unified School District to bring back a program that will provide identified locations for children going to and from school to go to if they feel threatened or in danger.

Committee Member Spinelli explained that the Safe House Program, which existed several years ago, would designate certain homes as a safe haven for children to go to for safety. Additionally, Mr. Spinelli suggested that school children be trained to drop their backpacks and run if they are accosted; otherwise, they could easily trip or be grabbed. The designated Safe Houses would have flags that are visible to and easily recognizable by the children.

Mayor Hansen suggested that the Police Department survey other law enforcement agencies on the successes and challenges of their programs. Police Lieutenant Virgil Monroe added that monitoring the program would be difficult, with background checks and owners of Safe Houses moving; however, those challenges could be overcome.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Virginia Lahr expressed concern that there are three rehabilitation centers (for those with drug and alcohol addictions or with behavioral conditions, such as schizophrenia) on the 400 block of Pine Street and complained that law makers are unable to deny requests for the establishment of these centers.

Grants and fundraising

- Dedicated to find new funding sources for East Side Improvement Committee endeavors and funding that will allow the City to provide services lost through cutbacks.

Ms. Asghar informed Council that the Committee would like to raise funds and apply for grants and requested that the Committee be provided a copy of "Grant Station," a publication of the League of California Cities that lists available grant opportunities. Ms. Keeter responded that the Committee may be able to subscribe to this service; if not, City staff can forward the publication via e-mail to the Committee contact person.

Council Member Hitchcock suggested that the Committee also look at the State and Federal Web sites for potential grants.

Ms. Asghar further requested that, should the City use a grant locator in the future, the East Side Improvement Committee be included.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Virginia Lahr stated that the Community Coalition in Stockton aids non-profit groups and that she would provide the Committee with the name of the contact person.

Continue on-going activities and functions

- Adopt budget policies and procedures.

Committee Member Yadav reported that he has been working to update the financial records of the committee (back to 1999) and requested assistance from the Finance Department with setting up the books.

- Landlord/Tenant issues.

Ms. St. Yves reported that the number of rentals in the City over the years has increased from approximately 22% to 47%. In regard to the rehabilitation centers, Ms. St. Yves suggested contacting Assemblymembers Nakanishi and Aghazarian as they have been helpful on this matter in the past. Some landowners are local and do not properly maintain their properties; others live out of the City and hire property management firms to handle their properties. Classes are available for rental residents, as well as for property owners; however, attendance is usually very low and many landlords do not attend unless forced to do so.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- A concerned citizen suggested that mortgage companies better educate home owners as to their responsibilities as a property owner and neighbor. There are 15 people living in the house next to her and the landlord routinely ignores her complaints.
- A concerned citizen suggested that Code Enforcement work closely with the Fire Department in enforcing fire code violations, such as small window exits and air conditioning units blocking escapes. This represents a dangerous condition, especially when there are large groups of people living in the home. Additionally, the greater number of people causes congested streets with the additional cars parked along the curbs. On the 4th of July, the Fire Department could not get through to put out a fire caused by fireworks. These neighborhoods were not designed for that many people.

Joseph Wood, Community Improvement Manager, explained that there is a formula based on square footage used to determine appropriate number of residents in a home. This formula, established by the State Housing Code, is quite liberal, and the City is required to abide by it. Unfortunately, a number of the complaints regarding overpopulation in homes meet the legal limits set forth in the code.

- A concerned citizen complained of neighbors in the 900 block of South Central who have animals that are not properly cared for. The mess and odor are a health issue, and there are medically-fragile children who live near this home. There are fire hazards on this property, and these conditions cause her property value to decrease. She opined that these conditions would not be tolerated and would be taken care of immediately if they existed on the west side of town.

Mayor Hansen recognized the frustration of the situation; however, pointed out that these conditions and situations are occurring throughout town, not just on the east side. He suggested contacting animal control and the health department and further requested that Community Improvement look into the situation.

Mr. Wood responded that a complaint on this location was received by his office last Thursday; staff has already inspected the residence and will be issuing an order.

- A concerned citizen suggested that code enforcement officers check properties in the evening when people are home from work, to which Mr. Wood responded that staff will make special arrangements when necessary.

In reply to Ms. Castro, Mr. Wood reported that in June his office received 83 complaints, 75 in July, and 45 for the first half of August. There are 500 cases, most of which are on the east side.

- A concerned citizen expressed that there are not enough code enforcement officers to handle the complaints.

Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman suggested that this is due to no apartment complexes being built in Lodi for over a decade.

Committee Member Golladay stated that the frustration level for residents is high and enforcement is not adequate. He suggested that problem areas be targeted with some "friendly heat" and that programs, such as the smoke detector program, be used to obtain entry into a home, at which time noticeable violations could be cited.

Ms. Castro suggested that when developers obtain permits for 100 units an agreement be made that 10 to 20 units be placed on the east side of town.

- Bob Johnson reminded Council and Committee Members that years ago residents brought forward nuisance lawsuits against landlords/property owners and questioned if this was still an option.

- Virginia Lahr responded that the lawsuits were quite successful; however, the former City Attorney, Randy Hays, put a halt to them in order to review the Committee's role under the umbrella of the City; that was eight years ago and nothing was ever resolved. The lawsuits were a last resort effort to get landlords to comply.

City Attorney Schwabauer explained that there is nothing preventing citizens to file private nuisance lawsuits against property owners. Additionally, the City Attorney's Office has the authority to file public nuisance lawsuits, which is on a broader context. Mr. Schwabauer believed that Mr. Hays' concern was most likely that members of the East Side Improvement Committee were practicing law without a license, given that members were giving advice on private nuisance lawsuits. Advice in this matter should more appropriately come from the City Attorney's Office.

Mayor Hansen stressed again that, as citizens, the option to file a private nuisance lawsuit on issues such as odor, traffic, number of people, etc. is available and can be done easily by filing a complaint with the small claims court for a minimal fee.

- A concerned citizen cautioned that these lawsuits are not always the perfect answer. She was involved in a successful lawsuit, which was appealed to the Superior Court and overturned. Those who sued were then forced to pay the landlord.

Council Member Howard suggested a different approach of legally dealing with visible and obvious violations, such as expired license/registration on vehicles parked in overcrowded areas, etc. Police Lieutenant Monroe confirmed that the Police Department can tow vehicles; however, there is a time limit (registration must be expired three months or more).

- A concerned citizen stated that police officers do not seem to interact with kids in the neighborhoods as much as they once did.

Lieutenant Monroe responded that there are School Resource Officers assigned to the schools and officers still stop to talk with the kids as often as they can; however, he was unsure how often it occurred in this particular neighborhood.

- A concerned citizen complained about the following issues in the 900 block of South Central and added that he would be willing, as a citizen, to pay more taxes to fund additional police officers:

- * pigeons and dogs;
- * number of cars parked on the street;
- * speeding traffic—speed limit should more appropriately be 25 to 30 mph; bike lanes should be installed to slow traffic; and a stop sign should be installed at Poplar and Central;
- * loud music; and
- * crime—increase police patrol or use Partners day and night to help reduce gang activity.

Lieutenant Monroe stated that radar trailers are used to collect data on whether or not speed limits are being exceeded and what time of day is more problematic. Additionally, the Police Department has scheduled gang operations in the area for the upcoming weekend.

Council Member Hitchcock stated that speeding is the number one issue for most neighborhoods and it will never be eliminated completely, especially on collector streets like Central Avenue. She agreed that a greater police presence is necessary on the east side considering that the crime level is higher, to which Mr. Beckman concurred.

Mayor Hansen stated that nine officers were added to the force while he was Chief; however, he believed there would never be enough officers to ensure blanket coverage of the City. These problems will continue to exist, despite the on-going efforts of the Police Department (e.g. patrol strategies on the east side, Partners patrolling with limited enforcement abilities, etc.).

Mayor Pro Tempore Beckman requested that Police Chief Adams appear before the Council to discuss a 5th police quadrant, to which Ms. Keeter replied that she would schedule the subject matter.

Committee Member Asghar requested that Council research what other cities are doing with their prevention programs.

Chairperson Castro suggested that the Committee and Council meet more often to further understand and address the issues of the east side.

- The previous citizen who spoke regarding the 900 block of South Central further complained that police officers routinely show up 45 minutes to an hour after a call is placed and in one instance, did not show up at all.
- Virginia Lahr questioned if handicap curbs are scheduled to be installed on Garfield Street and asked if additional street sweeping could be scheduled on the east side to handle the increased litter from carts selling food products (many of which are operating without licenses).

C. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council and Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

ATTEST:

Jennifer M. Perrin
Deputy City Clerk